

OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MARCH 19, 2008

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission met in regular session on Wednesday, March 19, 2008 at 5:15 p.m. in the lower level conference room at the Muscatine City Hall, 215 Sycamore. Members present included Jo Ann Carlson, Jerry Lange, Devin Pettit, Mary Anne Kessler and Jane Reischauer. Staff present included Jim Rudisill.

The consent agenda, including the distributed meeting agenda and the minutes of the regular February 20, 2008 meeting, was reviewed. Pettit added "New Membership" to the distributed agenda under 10: Other Business. He also requested the February 20 minutes on Page 2, Paragraph 10 be amended to more accurately reflect his report on an Iowa City preservation program described by Michael Maharry, president of the Friends of Muscatine Historic Preservation (FMHP), during an earlier Friends meeting. The Iowa City program supports strong city efforts to assume ownership of properties the owners don't maintain. Pettit said he had asked Steve Boka, Muscatine Planning, Zoning and Building Safety Director, if a similar program could be implemented in Muscatine.

After that discussion, Carlson moved to approve the consent agenda; Reischauer seconded; motion passed; all ayes.

The first agenda item discussed by the commission was the status of the West Hill Historic District nomination. Rudisill said the state review committee had agreed to forward the nomination to the National Park Service (NPS) for formal approval, pending several minor revisions. Consultant Rebecca McCarley had completed those revisions and had filed the final report with the state, Rudisill said.

The formal approval by the NPS should come in April or May, possibly in time for National Historic Preservation Month activities. The listing will be announced on the NPS website.

The Mulberry Avenue Survey was then discussed. Several commissioners provided an update on their progress.

Pettit said he is getting the 700 block slowly completed. Kessler has continued to make contact with current property owners to obtain property and historical records she can use on the property inventory reports.

In a related discussion, Kessler also reported she had obtained the website address for the online city directories/newspapers. It is HYPERLINK "http://access.newspaperarchive.com" <http://access.newspaperarchive.com> Pettit also provided HYPERLINK "http://musserpl.newspaperarchive.com" <http://musserpl.newspaperarchive.com> as another site available through the Musser Public Library.

In addition, Pettit reported the library has a lot book that could provide some ownership records. Kessler said a photocopy of a map of 76 Township was also available, but she had not found any information on replatted subdivisions. Pettit suggested she contact McCarley, who had apparently found information on the replats while doing research on one of the surveys. Another option would be to ask county auditor staff.

The Endangered Historic Building List was the next agenda item, but officials agreed there was no updated information and this item should be dropped from future agendas until something new develops.

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The next item discussed was the 2007 Certified Local Government (CLG) Annual Report, and specifically that portion of the report filed with the National Park Service (NPS). Rudisill reminded the commission he had notified it in February the state portion of the annual report had already been filed.

The annual report made to the NPS focused on updates to the number of historic resources originally identified as the community's CLG baseline. This baseline was established when the city initially submitted its application as a CLG. Although there was still some question on what study the city actually used to establish its original baseline, it appeared the 1974 Susan Appel survey was the document used. This assumption was based on a March 26, 2004 email from Kerry McGrath, CLG Coordinator, to Rudisill, in which McGrath reported the Appel survey was included in the State Historical Society of Iowa inventory. No other surveys were apparently listed.

Rudisill reported that based on demolition and other information provided by Pettit and Reischauer, and his own review, Muscatine's CLG baseline had been updated to 492 historic properties in the 2007 report to the NPS.

In associated discussion, Pettit pointed out he was still interested in updating Muscatine Area Geographic Information Consortium (MAGIC) records with correct construction dates of buildings in the downtown and West Hill areas using information from the completed surveys of those neighborhoods.

Carlson also requested cost information to have the downtown and West Hill survey information and reports provided on CDs. Rudisill will contact McCarley for those costs. Rudisill also was directed to talk with Mark Warren about establishing a historic layer to MAGIC.

The commission next discussed plans to hold a joint commemoration of 2008 Historic Preservation Month on May 3-4 with the Muscatine Friends of Historic Preservation (MFHP).

Kessler reported first on her efforts to identify and arrange a tour of historic homes for May 4. She reported difficulty in reaching people to determine if they were interesting

in opening their home as part of the tour. She is hoping to have three houses available for the tour.

Properties she is currently investigating include 516 W. Second, 515 W. Second, 606 W. Third, 513 W. Third and several others. Reischauer said the owners of 606 W. Third were unlikely prospects because they favor privacy. Kessler said she would be willing to have her house at 1222 Mulberry on the tour if someone would look at it first and decide if it would meet the qualifications. She pointed out her furnishings are current styles, which might not be an issue since most people who visit the house look at the woodwork and large stairway. Commissioners indicated the furnishings style was not a serious problem that should disqualify Kessler's house from the tour.

Kessler agreed to continue contacting owners and felt that even if some requests are turned down this year, the contacts might help with another tour next year.

The commission then discussed the potential nominees for the 2007 recognition awards program. Kessler requested the original list be expanded to include 210 Parkington (Laurence & Carol Gatzke) for paint; 1420 Mulberry (Ralph Lillibridge House - Daniel & Linda Steele) for paint; 126 W. Second (Hampe Brothers - Metcalf, Conlon and Siering) for paint; and 114 W. Eighth (George Volger House - Matt and Amber Elder) for general restoration and paint.

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The original list included 128 W. Second (Shamrock Hall - Robert Martin) for façade renovation, including paint; 206 Cherry (Clark-Blackwell House – Roy Carver III) for copper gutter work; 207 Broadway (Sterneman House – Michael Maharry & Shelly Mckillip) for general restoration and paint; 501 E. Mississippi Drive (Peter Musser House – Scott & Anne Lesnet) for general restoration, simulated slate roof & copper flashing; Greenwood Cemetery (City of Muscatine) for gravestone restoration; 214 E. Second (Hubbies - David & Linda Bird) for interior restoration – bar and ceiling); 1518 E. Fifth (Park Avenue Meat Market – Dave Armstrong) for paint; 116 W. Eighth (Fred Heerd House ? – Michael Tompkins) for general restoration and paint.

The awards will be presented during ceremonies on May 3, although a location for the activity has not been identified.

Because of the relatively large number of potential award winners, Pettit and Lange both said they felt the list was too large and a smaller number should be identified. Lange also said he favored completed projects.

Reischauer said she felt the initial list had been developed as more of a brainstorming effort rather than an actual selection procedure. However, she also pointed out a larger list would encourage more owners, especially those with limited resources who do less extensive work, to do complete projects. She also reviewed the 2006 minutes and reported that five awards were presented last year.

Pettit then asked each commissioner to identify their top five from the list. Kessler suggested a final list could be developed at the next Muscatine Friends of Historic

Preservation meeting. Pettit said the list would need to get to Michael Maharry.

The commission next discussed the proposed joint meeting with the Louisa County Historic Preservation Commission (LCHPC).

Pettit said he had not talked yet with Frank Best, LCHPC member, but would try soon. However, Best is now running for a seat in the Iowa House and Pettit said that might delay any meeting.

Pettit did suggest it might be more convenient to schedule a dinner meeting and that meeting could substitute for a regular meeting of the MHPC.

Committee and other reports were then provided.

Kessler said she had been a guest on Dan Clark's radio show the day before. Tom Savage had substituted for Clark as moderator. Kessler said the discussion on historic activities and efforts in Muscatine had gone well, although there had been few call-ins.

The commission also learned the Marshak House (417 W. Third) might be on the real estate market. Pettit said he is trying to reach local attorney Joni Axel to determine the status of the house.

If the house is for sale, it might provide an opportunity for the MFHP to become involved, commissioners agreed.

The status of the downtown book project was also discussed. Pettit pointed out the MFHP had assumed management of that effort. Kessler said Tom and Sharon Savage have been doing quite a bit of work on it and have started 10-15 stories. It was unknown if a formal contract had been finalized or signed.

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In other business, the commission reviewed its current membership and upcoming replacement needs. Lange and Diane Day's terms both expire on June 30, 2008. Lange will be ineligible for re-appointment because he has served two full terms.

There was a short discussion on whether or not Lange's seat was reserved for a council member. However, after reviewing the former membership list, it was decided that was not the case. However, commissioners indicated they were not opposed to that possibility.

Day will be completing her first term on the commission and will be eligible for re-appointment if she wishes. Several individuals were mentioned as possible replacements for Lange and Pettit encouraged members to continue to develop a list of potential members.

In final action, Carlson reminded the commission about Paula Mohr's offer to come to Muscatine and provide a training session. Pettit said any effort to schedule her should wait until the joint meeting with Louisa County is held. He said that could be brought up at that time as a collaborative effort.

The meeting then adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair